

The Gleaner 1998-99



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The Gleaner 1998-1999

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Dreamer's Disease

We have the dreamer's disease.

We have hope

Yet it is not in our hand.

We have goals

Yet they are not good enough.

We have inspiration

Yet it is not moral.

We have ideas

Yet they fall on deaf ears.

Do we have the dreamer's disease?

Can we have success?

Can we prosper as a society?

Can we work as a team to reach a united goal?

Is that the dreamer's disease?

Our hope is crushed by violence and greed.

Our goals are killed by conflicting government.

Our inspiration is destroyed by immoral role models.

Our ideas extinguished by narrow-minded politicians.

What is the dreamer's disease?

This disease is not a disease at all.

It is what is going to make our generation celebrated.

We have the want

We have the need

We have the will

And we will conquer.

**We will take back what is rightfully ours.
We will hurdle any obstacles already placed in front of us.
We will tear down any barriers that stand in our way.
And we will achieve our hopes and dreams.**

**Do we have the dreamer's disease?
Yes we do!**

**Let's open our minds.
Let's create our future.
Let's take power back.**

**We will not bow down to any of the mistakes created by generations
before us.
We will not let crooked politicians control our lives.
We will not be told what to do.**

Let's fight back and make it our world!

By, Nick Bernstein



The Stranger

I met him the other day,
Under the light of the full moon.
He wore a dark cape.
Told me he came for me,
For my soul.
And that he would get,
Eventually.
His raspy voice, mumbled.
Mumbled the words...
 Forgiveness... forgive me...
 The truth will come about.
Thick, massive fingers
Took my last breath away.
Now you look into my eyes;
See The darkness?
But can you see deeper,
Further into my soul?
See the light at the other end?
All the love I have to give?
Don't you see it?
Reach out and get it,
Save me, save yourself.
One must overcome the darkness,
For darkness is a blanket
That holds you bound in chains,
Smothering everything.
Including you.
The truth will come out.
Push through the darkness.
Come out,
Come out and play.

THE GIFT

(or "If Everything Happens that Can't be Done")
with apologies to E. E. Cummings

*My father moves through a world of love --
Who gave to me the love of "live,"*

*The "you" of "me" --
the "have" of "give,"
the "now" of "when" -
the "help" of "need" - -*

*The proper time to plant a seed.
Who showed to me the peace of strife -
the calm of fear,
the joys of life.*

*A broken cup that was repaired,
A lazy groundhog in his lair.
A spotted trout-
a skating rink;*

A thousand million ways to THINK.

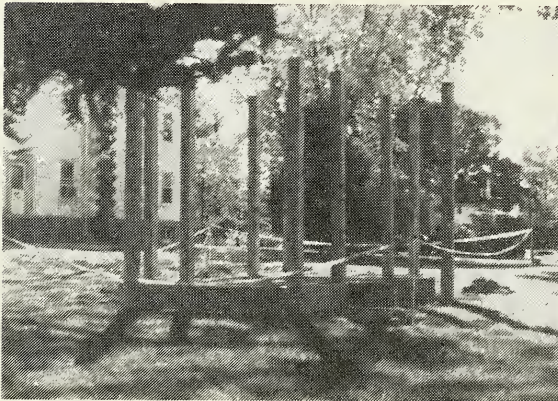
*A baby chick whose life was lost -
To do your best, at any cost.
Who asked of me the "Is" of "Should"
himself a living "Done" of "Could"
In truth the "Give" of others "Take" -
(for me always - the "fix" of "break")
The world I view so magically -
For all the love he gives to me.*

By, Joann Donigan

Solitude, Silence.
Not a sound to be heard.
But alas, a whisper
Faint, faint as can be.
Barely audible, but heard nonetheless.
The words spoken are important
Wanted to be heard by all.
Each word, each sentence
A meaning all its own.
Words with forever meaning,
Never changing for it is truth.
Barely audible, but important.
Listen carefully to not miss a syllable
His words hold everlasting truth

By, Kelly Barnes

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EAL

War Song

The distant sound of gunfire pulls tears from
the soldier's eyes.
Another frightful day he is not prepared to die.
Clouds rumble overhead, blocking out the sun.
He is too scared to fight, yet too brave to run.
The heat of battle draws nearer with each labored breath
Beckoning closer the inevitable death.
He remembers of days long past,
Of love for all eternity to last.
There is no hope, for he is already dead
Still he trudges along with legs of lead.
In a sudden blur all is lost--
Nothing to gain, yet life is the cost.
As he passes away a tear comes to his eye:
He did nothing wrong and still he must die.
Young of the Earth, yet old of the mind;
So much to do, absolutely no time.
He lies still on the ground, for his spirit is gone,
Nameless to us, yet we all know his song.

By,
Courtney Beidelman

EAL



No real words,
Just looks and gestures.
Do they mean what they portray?
Can I truly follow my heart,
Believe what it's telling me?

Lack of communication
Does not fill my needs.
Words are important,
More important than actions.
Do our actions portray
The way we feel,
Or is it true on one end,
But false on another?

Are the actions enough,
Enough to fill the void?
No, I need more,
I need words from the heart.

By, Kelly Barnes



Dr. Janice Corbett

Untitled V

In the time past hippie love
Was you, me and the green earth
Days of old, we were longing
Where we could stand naked
Without hate in our hearts
The dawn was ours and our alone
You and I and the sunrise
We bathe in the moonlight
Shimmering water and moonbeams
Dance upon your naked form
The water is ours and ours alone
We kiss under the silver pendent
In the cloak of night as water
Flows around us
We embrace in a kiss
Dare not breathe my love this night
Taste the lava in your blood,
The ice in my eyes cold and blue
Taste you will my tear upon my cheek
We are alone
We are ours and ours alone
Nothing was wanted
Because we had all we needed
You and I and the green earth
Where we lie naked
Upon the gold sand beach
We two as one
We are safe, alone without sin
The world is ours and ours alone
Naked, we kiss
Bodies naked
Breathing as one, you and I
You my earth, my moon
I, your stars, your sun
We breathe the same air of a kiss
Lip to lip we are one
Naked on the green earth
We as one
Alone
Naked
Freedom, ours and ours alone
Unbound unfold we are one
No heaven no hell

Coral Castle

Made by the hands of one man alone,

A dedication to lost love,

Inside, a heart-shaped dining table, gliding revolving table, throne room, and more,

Not of clouds, dreams, or sand, but of coral,

Fashioned in the mysterious ways of the pyramids,

This coral castle of love is a riddle never to be solved.

Listening to the choir

Choirs of prophets chanting “para donde vas”

The gallant noble priest “ich bin ein berliner”

Angels with dirty faces peer through rainbow glass

Naked children dancing in frankincense and myrrh

A thousand points of light that no one can see

Eyes closed it seems to get darker after the dawn

Broken candles for homeless on avenue b

Music says the lunatics are on the east lawn

Simple hollow faith barks we have god on our side

Dow Jones, Merrill Lynch are the new idolatry

Blue light special abortions coat hangers aisle nine

Look, see George chop the roots out from dad’s cherry tree

No black and white adorn the man on the soap box

He tastes truth life is like a box of chocolates.

JDS



The Past's Future

Birds screeched and flew out of the way as she ran through their forest domain. An arrow whizzed by her ear and crashed into the tree next to her. Woodchips dug into her cheek, drawing a thin line of blood. She took no notice of it as she continued to flee.

Sasha glanced behind herself. There was no sign of her pursuers but that didn't mean they weren't far back. She ducked behind a huge oak tree that was surrounded by thick, green bushes. In silence, she waited, holding her breath in anticipation. After a few seconds, a group of soldiers ran past the oak tree. The sharp metal blades of their swords reflected the sunlight and their heavy armor clinked noisily. The thundering of her heartbeat filled her ears while she stood perfectly still. The soldiers continued on, neither seeing nor hearing her.

16 Relief washed over her body like a great waterfall. Air whistled in and out between her lips as she struggled to capture her breath. She was careful to hide herself among the bushes as she sat down with her back against the tree. Tears of fury and rage welled up in her eyes but she would not let them spill. That was for another time.

Sasha thought back to the jumble of faded, torn papers contained in the strange box she'd found in her father's potato field. It was through them that all her questions about the past were answered and the truth of her existence was discovered. Her world was much like any other seventeen-year old girl's living in the year 216 R.A. (real age). Her father owned a small piece of farmland in the northwestern continent, and they lived in a one-room shack. The floor was made of dirt and the walls of rotting, bug-infested wood. A dirty, stone well was the source of water for her father, younger brother, and

herself. Their mother had died along with their younger sister during childbirth five years earlier. It was a painful experience, but medicine was rare and usually didn't work. All one had a chance to learn was their father's trade, so her destiny was farming.

That was until she'd found the buried box. It wasn't made of normal materials like wood or metal, but something called plastic. She'd read that on the side of it. It took her a long time to figure out how to unlatch it, but inside she found the truth about the history of the Earth.

Three hundred years earlier, life on Earth had been better for the average person living in the northwestern continent. A thing called technology, a word Sasha did not understand, was in full bloom and all people were considered equal. A new invention called the computer came into being. They soon inhabited every home and school in 97.6% of the countries in the world. People could play games on them, meet new people, and learn things. It was then decided to educate children through the computer instead of a traditional school. Over a period of thirty or forty years, real life slowly came to a halt as the youngest generation became completely dependent on them. A new disease developed that people nicknamed 'computer eyes' which infected millions across the globe. It developed from staring at the computer screen for extended periods of time, like years. Still people refused to give up their computer-generated refuges.

It was then, during the Earth's most vulnerable time, that the Invaders came. They attacked from space before anyone realized what was going on. The people abandoned their computers and fought with renewed life. The bloody wars lasted for a decade but the Earth finally defeated the Invaders. Leaders from every section of the planet decided that the only way to prevent this from happening again was to ban all

technology and advancements made over the previous two centuries. Their reasoning was that no alien empires would want to conquer an innocent, farming-based planet. Critical things like plant feeders, airplanes, and medical equipment and drugs were eliminated. History books were burned and the past was forgotten. Disease and starvation ran rampant among the survivors trying to adapt at this new way of life. Only one group refused to obey the new laws laid down by the leaders of the Earth. The Rebels felt technology should have been changed rather than destroyed. They were cursed and executed until they moved underground to live the way they wanted in peace.

As Sasha remembered that, she breathed in deeply. Her quest to find them was almost complete, she thought as she took out the map that had been in the plastic box. Surely they would have medicine to cure her brother of the deadly flu. She carefully looked to make sure the guards who *protected* the people were gone. A passage was indicated just a few steps ahead and she'd be -

“Aaaahhh!” she screamed as her body fell through protective covering of the Rebel’s hideout. She landed with a loud thud on her side, and the breath was knocked from her lungs.

Strong hands grabbed her shoulders and helped her to her feet. Breathlessly, she managed to say, “Help me.”

“Of course,” the deep voice said and released her. The man’s clothes were strange but his smile was very reassuring. He looked at her and a surprised expression crossed his face. “You’re from above!”

“Yes, please help me. My brother is sick with the flu. I know you have medicine to cure him,” she explained.

He picked up a book marked 'Biology' and led her through a tunnel that extended into the ground. Small boxes on the ceiling released sunlight it must have captured, lighting the way. When Sasha looked back, she saw that the trap she'd fallen through had reset itself. When asked, her companion simply replied, "Optical illusion." After a moment of silent walking, he asked her, "How do you know of us? I thought everyone up there had forgotten."

Sasha handed him the map. "I found that with the truth. Everything was wrong. Technology never should have been given up. I want to—"She stopped mid-sentence, for the sight before her stunned her into silence.

The underground cavern was huge. Tall as a skyscraper, wide as a large park, the whole thing lit by artificial light. Part of a town had been built inside and tunnels in the walls extended to other places. This, however, was where the stores were located. Her guide told her to stay at the edge of the tunnel while he went to get what she needed from the drug store. Not a word came out of her as he returned and led her back to the opening above.

"May I come back?" she asked as he handed her the medicine.

"I hope you will. Just don't tell anyone up there where we are. It's a secret," he smiled and helped her out.

As she emerged, Sasha thought to herself, "We are the ones living in the past. They are the future."

By, Robin Goldblum

I see the world
I have seen the world today.
With its sex and lies all on video tape
I'm sorry to say
And its rapes and murders and child abuse galore.
Don't forget the tears
Oh! Its suffering and its poor.
I've seen the night sky blaze
Immersed in its fire and polluted by war.

I see the world
I have seen the world today.
With its laughs and its cheers,
Filling the brilliance of day
And its love and its care taking over you and me
Oh! Its joyous youth seizing the day.
I've seen the shimmering rainbow
Clearly illuminating the path that heads our way.

I see the world
I have seen the world today.
And I know it enough that it can't be one way.
There can be a majority and to you I do say:
How do you see the world
How have you seen the world today?

Time goes by

It has only been three days,
But days turn into years.
Already he knows my feelings,
Which were probably better left unsaid.
For now he holds within his power
The ability to make my soul complete
Or to crush the dreams which I hold so dear.
No one really knows and only time will tell
If it will just be three days,
Or the days turn into years.

By,
Courtney Beidelman



The Nightmare of Reality

*In loving memory of
Rob Spicer*

To see
Is not always to believe
One has a sight -
A vision,
The beholder blinks
To erase the nightmare
But it repeats,
Much like *deja vu*.
If only it were known
That the outcome
Would have touched *you*.
If only the clock could
Be turned back -
My dream would NOT
Have become
Reality.
And you could walk amongst us,
Grace us with your presence -
If only I might have known--
How shall I now live
Knowing what I know -
Knowing that every moment
Was witnessed -
Just days prior
To that fatal Hour?

Everyone passes,
Yet there you lie,
Only it's not who you are -
You need a glove in hand,
A smile,
A skip in your step,
And a heart overflowing
With your golden love.
Why must it be that
One's heart be plagued
By dreams
Of reality -
Yet not know who to call,
Who to touch?

By, Shannon Clements

Why has God "blessed" some
With this curse -
To not be able to
Give back
To those who so deserve? ...
So now flowers grow
Where you once played
And our hearts can only remember
What they want so much
To forget -
Yet cherish deeply,
Heaven must be beautiful -
And have diamonds
That keep their green
When everything here
Turns dark and gray.
(That's a remembrance of you.)

Your gentle soul
Reached out,
To encompass all,
And your arms embraced
Even the outcasts of society.
So dearly will you be missed;
So much do I wish that
I could be given
Just a moment -
To know,
To tell *you*, of what lay ahead...
To give back
The rich fullness of your life.
...Please smile down
Upon us,
Let us know
Your forgiveness,
Your love.
Please be our
Guardian Angel
Now that you have grown wings.

Is me

The streetlight smiled down upon my soul
As I sat on the porch drinking night
Cool and crisp down my hungry palette
Another star to make the universe whole

Who am I to sit and quench mine thirst
Not Jefferson's declaration or
Any great letter from galleon
Ordained me from an ignorant curse

I am a poet, a dreamer of
Many things and strings and ceiling wax
Smiling before Cortez and Ceasar
Shylock's witness to seeing love

I have seen T.S. Eliot's love
A hard wasteland with barren skyscrapers
No waning moon to touch warmth under
And no sunlight to dance above

I have heard the chairman croon velvet
Soft hands grasping together tighter
Feeling sound like a soft memory
Of the roars before I was born

I have sand Mr. Bob Dylan's words
In meadows under teenage starlight
Spoke of politics, god, siddartha
Under trees serenaded by birds

I have touched the warmth of midday naps
and Rocky's steps to Rodan's thinker
I have felt the wind of country drives
Riding chrome and steel without a map

I have tasted the tiramissu
Of a warming port before a blaze
Cool refreshing water before a
Well deserved rest from a honest day

All of these have made me what you see
A toe that touched waters east and west
Fingers that ran through grass north and south
Sitting on this street lit porch is me
7/12/98

Trainspott

Laying across the tracks of life. Bright stars so far and shine in my eyes. Dealing with true lies. People at this station stop say who's that? Take a step back feel the breeze as it leaves you with a memory full of smiled and colorful childs lets all come together as we ride the bad weather, coming closer to the millennium. Take it back to the roots where we drink and dance to the brass drums your feeling dumb with obsolete mentality you see your kids grow and go you unfold the spell. It's not what your were once told times change and all things rearrange you turn the page and see your mind in a cage filled with rage; as the winds die down you hear the sound of a different drummer your heart wants to move on but your mind stands strong saying this what we were taught but this is where you go wrong. Everyone gets derailed on the tracks of life but the reason to live is to grow stronger so these life living tracks will last longer.

By, Chris Holman

past times
she sits
feeling what I feel
standing six feet close and
closer
wanting
needing
freedom
we think about
which destroys what we had and
my emotion moves on.

By, Chris Holman



Dr. Janice Corbett



Sound Effects: Ammonoosuc Enchantress

Sweetly singing silverbrook,
Coppery clinks, like
Cowbells tinkling liquidly:
Luscious loping wavelets
Kissing pebbles coolly.

By, Dr. Karen Schramm



The Falcon

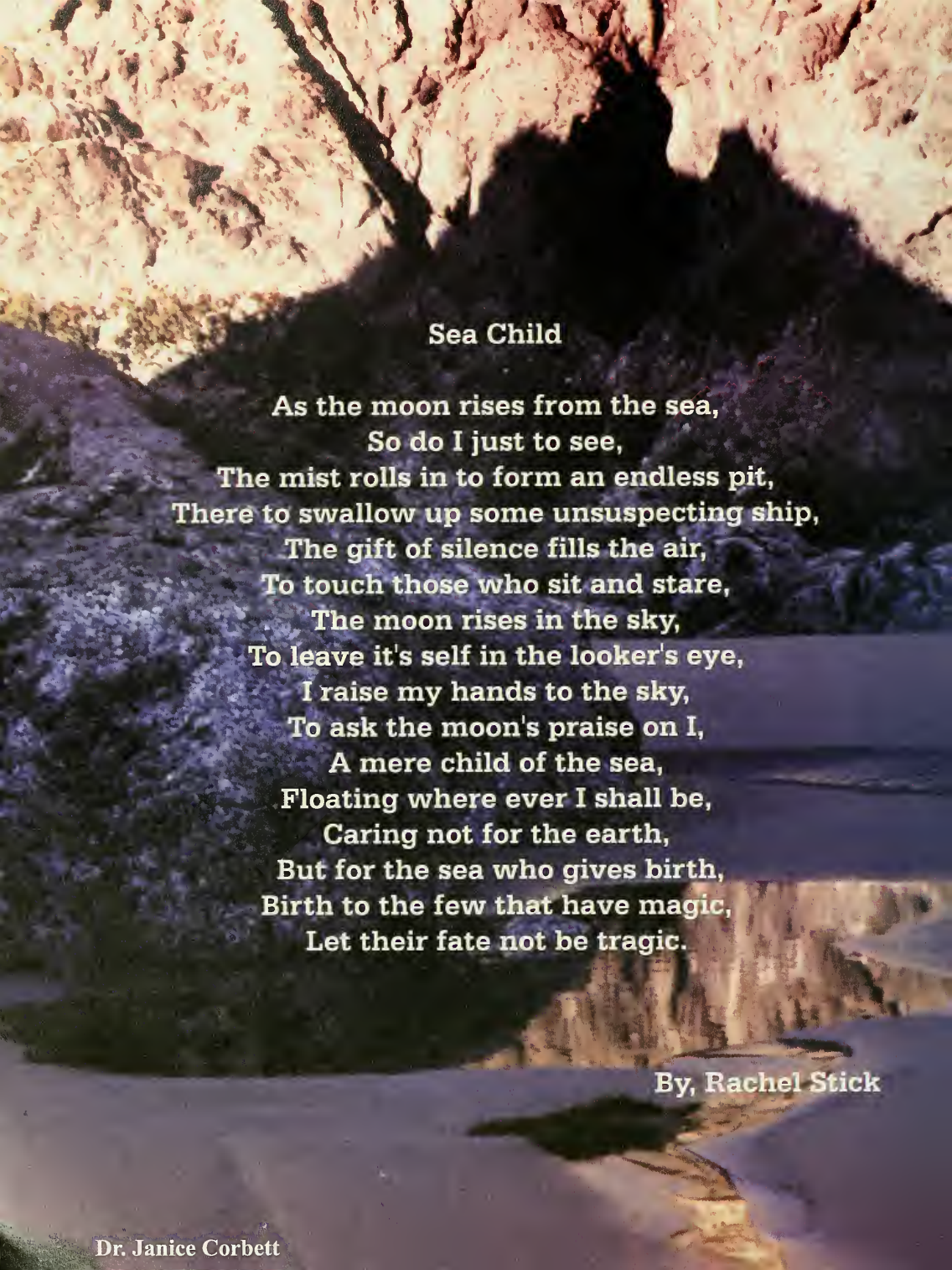
The silhouette of a falcon
Illuminated by the sun
With wings spread far across the sky
Through the mist of a waterfall
It flies

Like a phoenix out of the ashes
A burning mist drips from her wings
and she soars to the land of the stars
to steal the gravel from father time

the harmony of the gods clutched in its beak
the falcon shoots down through the sky
cold ice freezes feathers so sleek
yet heart and soul and will to fly
break the spell and light the fires of hell

the world below never truly innocent
judgment ripped from the hands of government
the sun hides behind the hades's mountains
waiting for the phoenix to rise again.

JDS



Sea Child

As the moon rises from the sea,
So do I just to see,
The mist rolls in to form an endless pit,
There to swallow up some unsuspecting ship,
The gift of silence fills the air,
To touch those who sit and stare,
The moon rises in the sky,
To leave it's self in the looker's eye,
I raise my hands to the sky,
To ask the moon's praise on I,
A mere child of the sea,
Floating where ever I shall be,
Caring not for the earth,
But for the sea who gives birth,
Birth to the few that have magic,
Let their fate not be tragic.

By, Rachel Stick



Pacific Precipice

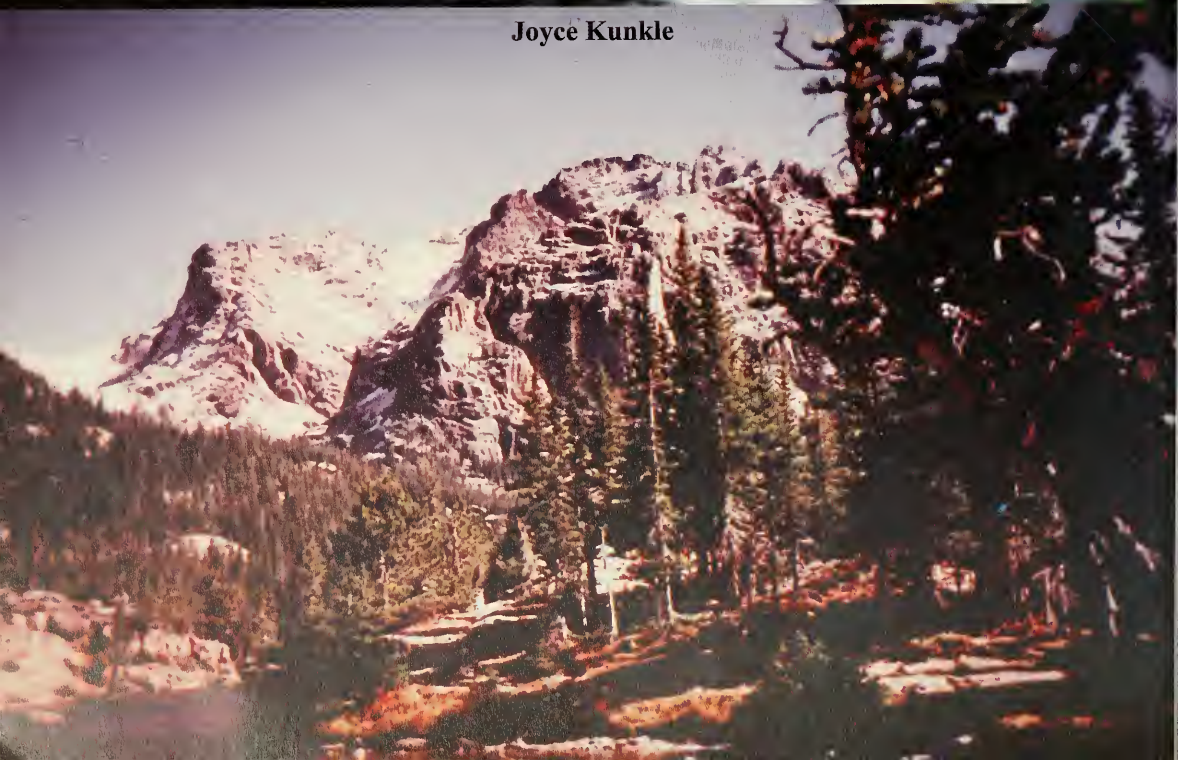
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	pinnacle	
	the	
	to	where
	way up	
	climbing	fog-kissed,
	and	
	clinging	salt-savory,
	tenacious,	
	wind-stroked,	cliff-rocks
	artemesia—	
	ice-plants	plunge
	chaparral,	
	with stately names:	so
	rugged flora	
	thrive:	deliciously
	hardy plants	
	by outcroppings,	into
	punctuated	
	ridge-path	cool
Lining the		indigo
		sea.

By, Dr. Karen Schramm



Joyce Kunkle



Dr. Janice Corbett





NIMROD

I may have told you about the first time I went to the Tristate Trombone Association. It is simply a group of people who get together once a month in Philadelphia to play trombone music. But what a group! The guys from The Philadelphia are sometimes there as well as individuals, amateurs like me, generally referred to as "weekend warriors," guys who earn their paychecks not wearing tuxedos, most of whom are considerably competent at blowing warm air through brass tubing. The director, if you could call him that, for what he does is not really so much actual directing as it is just sort of saying "okay, let's play this," is usually none other than Glenn Dodson himself, recently retired as P.T. (principal trombonist) at The Philadelphia and from a career of teaching at the venerable Curtis Institute of Music. Anyone who blows brass knows of him. The first time I went, at the encouragement of my teacher, I was apprehensive and put out little inquiries such as "Do you think I can hold my own?" "Do you really think I'm good enough?" Fishing, of course, for reassuring responses like "Don't worry, you'll be fine," but getting instead a hesitant, "Well, they *are* pretty charitable." Not at all reassuring.

What they do is pass out music and then you play it. Right then. No previewing, no trial tooting. It's beyond sight-reading, because in sight-reading you aren't expected to get *all* the dynamics and tempo changes precise on the first run-through. Most of the others can do it. Actually, I held my own pretty well.

Last week they distributed parts to a piece called "Nimrod" arranged for trombone ensemble by Glenn Dodson himself. I'd heard that the first thing he did upon retirement was to buy an RV and spend the summer touring the West. I supposed his RV was a Nimrod and that the piece was to be yet another one of those "Songs of the Open" Road medley things that composers write when they come home from trips in their Nimrods. Now I know Nimrods, at least the RV variety, quite well, for I have followed them, with their decal collections from RV parks of the Great American West Plus Florida, up Trail Ridge Road in Colorado, up The Going To The Sun Highway in Montana, and through Capitol Reef National Monument in Utah. Generally, they creep; but you can't possibly pass them on those roads. Therefore they *own* the road exclusively and there's nothing you can do but crawl along behind them till you reach the summit. Then it's easy to pass because they pull aside to read the guidebook, fish around in the rear of the vehicle for another box of Pringles, and maybe glance out the window. Nimrods just don't inspire musical composition.

We were supposed to play through this particular piece, arranged for eight trombonists. I could sort of do it but didn't really like it, appreciate it, nor much understand it. But on the way home I learned that it is from Elgar's "Enigma" variations, the 9th one, to be exact, and that nobody really knows why it's called that (that's what enigmatic about those variations) but it is probably based on the name of a mythological, biblical, or putatively noteworthy hunter. Of course there is a story behind that; of course it involves an enigma. I discovered that I have a recording of the piece on a compact disk, not for trombone ensemble but for full orchestra, and that it is beautiful. I figured out how to work the Repeat function on our CD player and I've had The London playing it all week long. It is haunting, the way those chords augment into each other then melt, mostly, but, exquisitely, *not quite* away only to resurge and diminish, to swell and

dissolve, again and again. Wagner-like, but with a more optimistic sort of tension. You can't possibly hum it; there isn't much melody to hum. It's the way the chords progress from one to another that makes it work.

Last weekend there was a special evening at Curtis to honor the career of Glenn Dodson.. At the pre-concert cocktail party I mingled about trying to insinuate myself into conversational groups and rapidly forsook the usual openers such as "So what kind of groups do you play in?" (a rough equivalent to the hiker's "So whereabouts are you folks from?"). The responses were sometimes things like "Various groups around Reading" or "A jazz quartet down the shore," but more often "The Chicago," or "The Phil."

I should tell you about "The Phil". I sort of know who the folks in The Philadelphia Orchestra trombone section are and I knew these guys were not they. But I was not too proud to be dumb enough to ask.. They meant the New York Philharmonic. When I reached the head of the handshaking line I was stunned that Glenn Dodson himself remembered my name.

Once they got through a long series of retirement party accolades and finally got around to playing a concert, things got serious. Just being in that intimate, hallowed recital hall in The Curtis Institute of Music, with all that fruit wood paneling, the padded chairs, and the barrel-vaulted ceiling, is an awesome experience, especially when you consider that a scientifically significant percentage of the best trombone players in the western world were assembled for this occasion right there in that room.

34 And then they started to play.

Oh, the tonal quality! Oh, the phrasing!
Oh, the lip vibrato! Oh, the legato tonguing!
The breath control!
The diaphragmatic support!
The air-to-vibration ratio!
Oh, the music!

Oh!

And the last piece on the program: an octet performing the 9th variation, "Nimrod," by Eigar, the one with the enigmatic chord progressions. Glenn Dodson himself took the baton. It only lasts four and a half minutes. It was followed by an Eternity of that classic oxymoron known as "deafening silence." Eventually somebody overcame the suppressed lachrymation, gulped through the goosebumps for oxygen, and precipitated the applause.

Deafening.

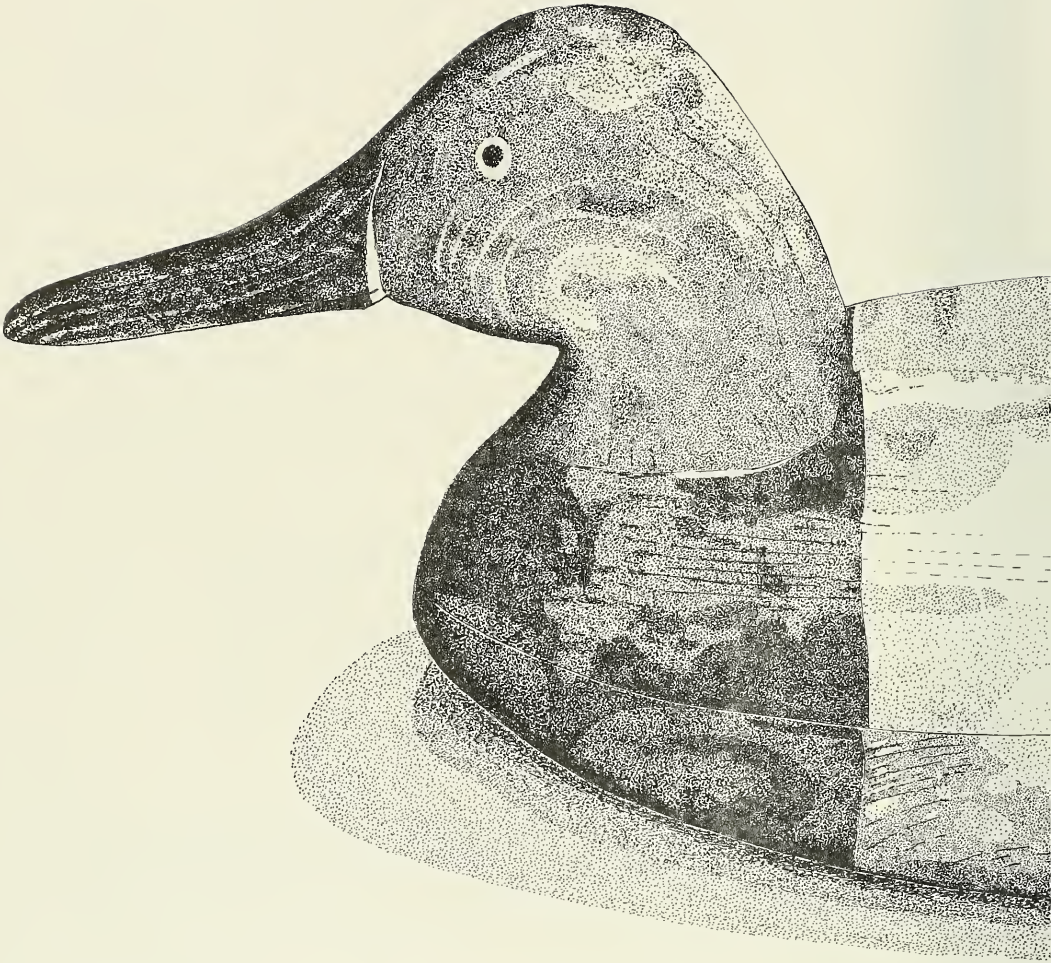
I urge you; next time you're stuck behind a Nimrod, think of "Nimrod."

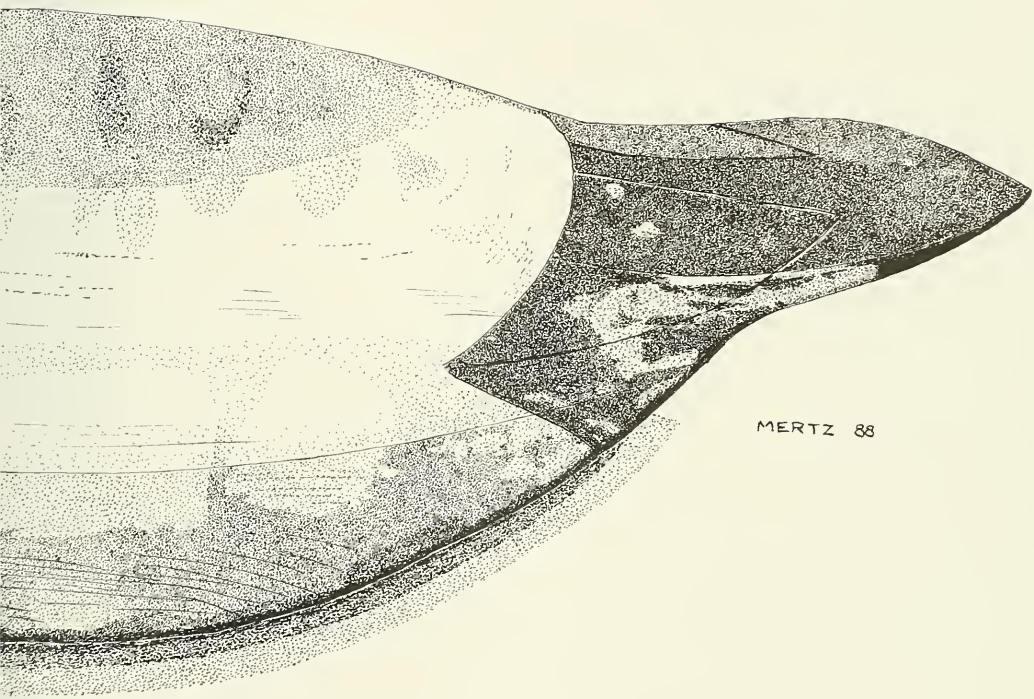
By, Jim Miller

“A Poem”

All the poems have roles in it.
Digesting power through a thought and
carried along by the dragon's tongue.
Locked in tiny cells within your mind
lies the inferiority of man, captured
by the legend of the snake. Taking
time to curse death is our misery in
which the snake laments. Serious is
the sun who enters your drained blood.
Am I speaking to you or being you?
Jealous murdered greed on envy's
behalf of lust

By, Erin Goldschmidt





MERTZ 88

Don't let the city burn

The city in all its glory, to mine eyes
Dancing in the street to the hawkers cries
Scents ancient Babylon, memories
Of the stirring of the melting pot brewing
Beneath concrete trees

Strides taken to view it all, unkempt
Glory in the raw, unholy ground
To those with morals bent
Who only hear paper money's sound

Diamonds and jewels litter the streets
A beggar's paradise, cornucopia
A garden home with the fruit of life
Princeful hobo's paradise

A throne sits beside a store
An old recliner to some, nothing more
To the king who watches the world press
A royal mountain peak, nothing less

The cool wind warmed my soul
Blowing fresh air within my mind
Another step taken into time
Life within the city's dust bowl.

JDS

Ocean Antics

Maritime Marksman

Taking careful aim,
Poseidon
bends back
the bow.
Suddenly he releases the taut string and the sea rushes forward
to greet
the
eager sands.

Rendezvous

The amorous seawaves reached out to stroke
The eagerly receptive sands.
And the passionate murmurings of these unabashed lovers
Were interrupted only the occasional laughter
Of the spying gulls.

Charioteer

Tireless liquid stallions
Rush upon the white-gold shore,
Presenting us with ocean's treasures,
Only to take them back once more.

Sea Gymnastics

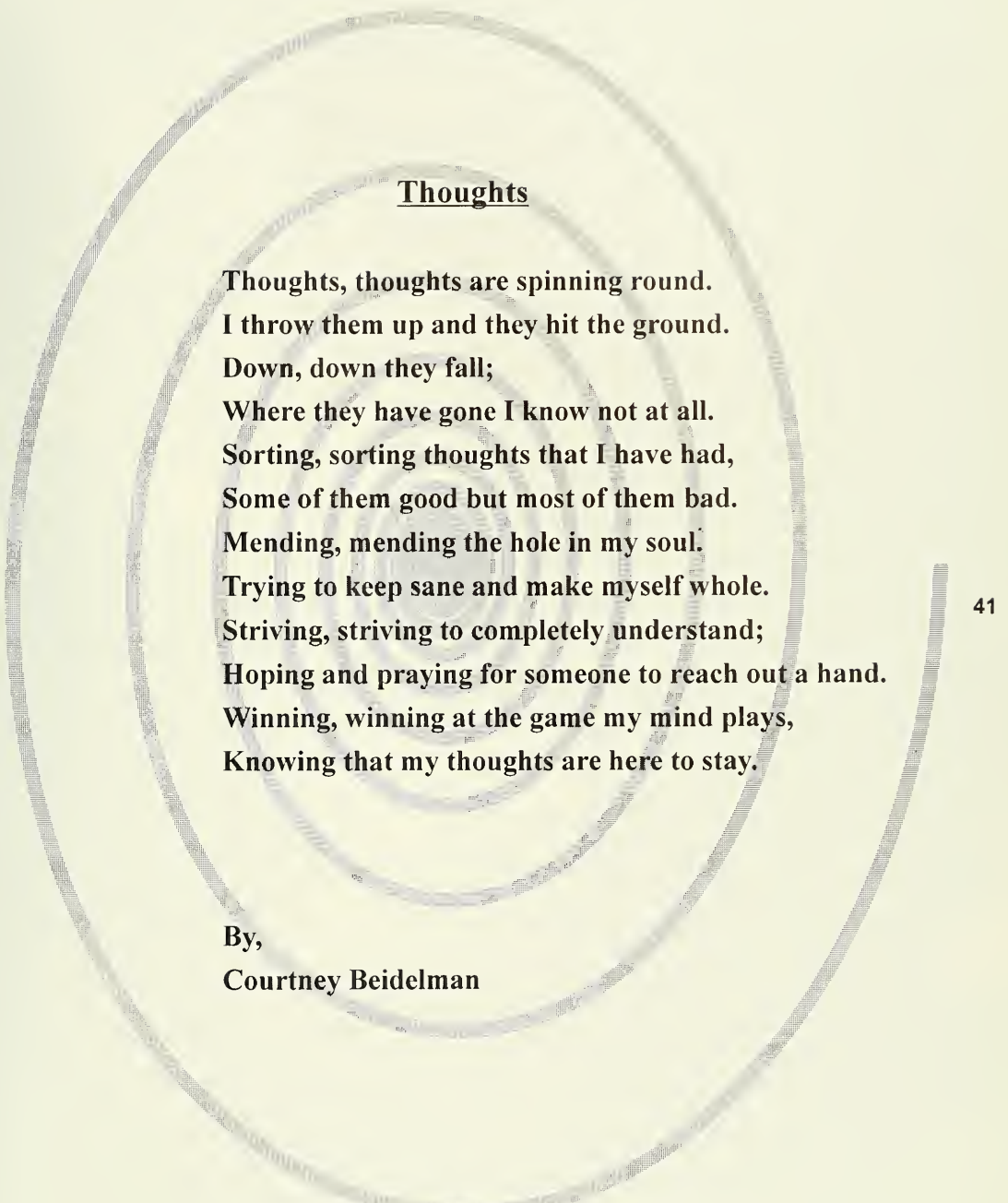
I stood there enraptured,
An uninvited guest
Cheering on the spirited somersault performances
Of the seawaves as they competed
In their salty games.

By, Dr. Karen Schramm

Appalachian Communion

Out in the tranquil mountain lands,
The mist still floating above cool lake.
The sun a white-gold ball of glory,
The softest of breezes swept across the waters,
Rippling the smooth and placid surface.
A flock of brown and white geese
Wandered upon the grassy banks,
Sampling the luscious vegetation.
One stately creature, sentinel for them all,
Stood and surveyed his water-lapped surroundings,
His long, dark neck curled in a question-mark of curiosity
At my unexpected approach. We stood silent,
Contemplating each other, and sensing that neither one of us
Had anything to fear, he resumed his perusal
Of the quiet waters, which sought the banks
With loyal devotion. The mist lifted slowly,
The trees standing majestic, serene,
Casting their many-hued reflections upon the mirror-lake.
As the wild spirit bade me move on, I hiked upon
The winding ridge-path, rejoicing in each perfect creation:
Minute magenta wheel-spoke flowers and lemon-yellow daisies,
Tiny coral starbursts and dainty orange bells,
And the leaves, as they came swirling down from autumn trees,
Fluttered brightly in the gentle wind,
Streaming like arboreal petals: yellow flames with russet tinge,
Ruby spangled with orange, pumpkin flecked with chocolate-brown,
Strewing the path with a wild and colorful carpet,
A polychromatic processional, lined with wild strawberries,
Lush sorrel, mosses, and pencil-thin colt's foot,
And the trees draped with nodding vines,
And bushes bearing their jewel-bright berries.
The sky glimmered softly through lacy canopy,
The palest of pastel blues. Up ahead I spied a chapel,
Nature-placed, among a grove of pines. My music was
The hymn of birdsong, trilling liquid, silvery notes,
My incense was of fir and laurel,
And I heard a catbird, crying in the peaceful wilderness:
"Come! Come! Thou sylvan spirit! Come and be one with us."
And this was my sweet morning communion:
The meats of nuts and the juices of berries,
And the breezes laying their tender hands
Upon my bowed head.

By, Dr. Karen Schramm



Thoughts

Thoughts, thoughts are spinning round.
I throw them up and they hit the ground.
Down, down they fall;
Where they have gone I know not at all.
Sorting, sorting thoughts that I have had,
Some of them good but most of them bad.
Mending, mending the hole in my soul.
Trying to keep sane and make myself whole.
Striving, striving to completely understand;
Hoping and praying for someone to reach out a hand.
Winning, winning at the game my mind plays,
Knowing that my thoughts are here to stay.

By,
Courtney Beidelman

SO CRAZY

Ah! For things can become so crazy,
sometimes floating images help me along
Out of this reality craze for a quick carpet
ride around the moon.
Yes, things can be so crazy.
For when the trees show their true eyes and
limbs welcome you;
a slide down the hallway
with incessant questions foggy in your mind;
never really paying attention.
So let's join and lie together,
as the smoke rises slowly. . .
tiny lights reflect in our eyes as we float.
Ah! For things are so crazy.

By, Melissa Anna Steucek



Your arms have held my spirit for too long
letting the trouble be much harder when it
has to be the end.
For now, all's fine, but I haven't seen your
wild face in so long.
I hear you in the distance crying out to me
"Wild Child!"
then none.
For it's your mind's eye working into mine;
not spoken thoughts but still in your head -
when will you set them free?
I've seen you as a brother, child,
and still your tagalong;
but now means more.
Now captured in a bubble is distorted from view.

by, Melissa Anna Steucek

A little girl lost

**The rain falls,
as the tears are too shed
the river runs
vast and long.
The oppression of anger,
sadness, and loneliness
weighs heavily,
scarring deeply.
Sitting amidst
the bustling crowd
provides a brief barrier
from the pages of reality.
There's a little girl
lost
among the shadows of yesterday,
cowering from the
unknowing light of tomorrow,
fearing even fear itself.
Possessing only harsh feelings
that yank at her soul, and
tear apart her heart.
A little girl lost
in a world
which used to be so familiar.**

By, Shannon Clements

Lost in the shadows

she stands so distant
yet I know
and can feel her need -
to be loved, to be held in the light.

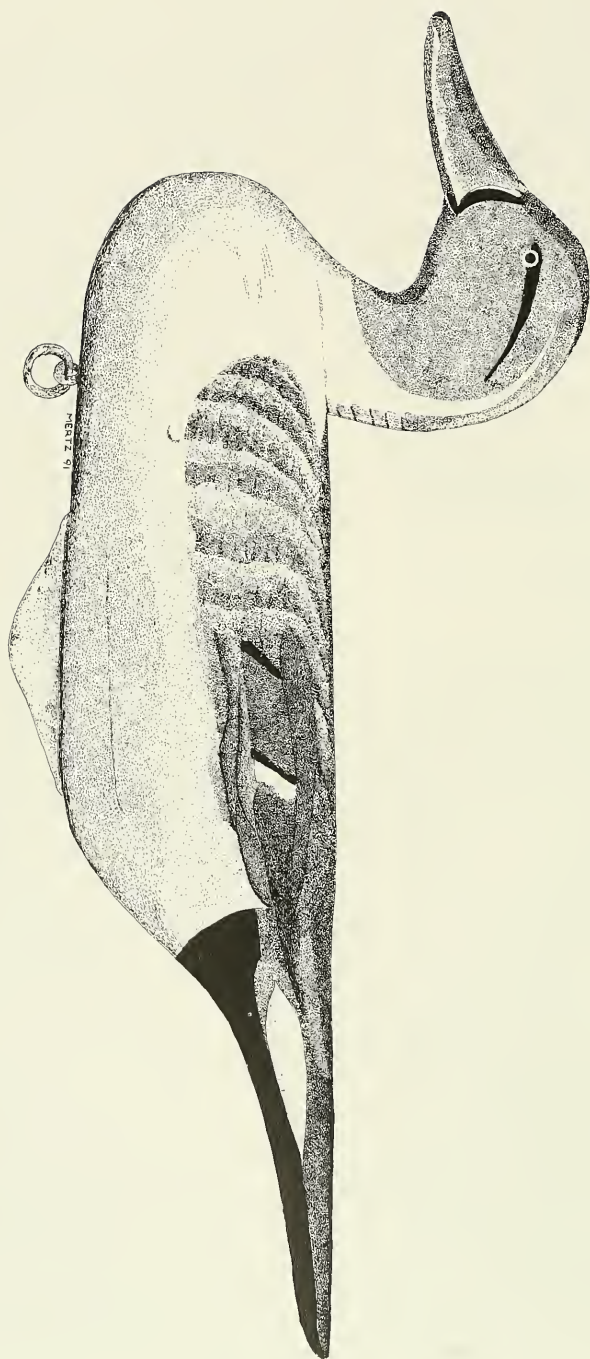
I reach
to penetrate the
edges of her reality
with a gentle touch.
I wish that
moth would fly,
to free her
so she might once again speak -
so her beauty could shine
and be seen by all,
especially her.

If only kind words
could be shed
and absorbed
by her deaf ears...
...please reach to join us.

My beautiful girl,
your presence is so dearly missed.
thy spirit should not
be troubled so,
let thy heart embrace the warmth -
and slowly open
like a budding flower
to the morning sun.
I want to let you know
how much we care,
how much we will always
be here for you.

A friendship is not part-time -
it lingers in the light,
as well as the shadows.
Please take my hand
and do not let go,
for together we are much stronger
than alone.

I long to say so much
and I don't ever want
it to be too late...



My World

I can change hell to heaven and heaven to hell
Inside my rage beginning to swell
As two worlds merge, souls go insane
While my inner-most demons feed off of the pain
Their forms begin to warp and twist
What once was human, now demon kissed
Hell spawn born
From flesh that's torn
They all approach their master
The legions form
Demons swarm
As I spread disaster
Hell rumbles
Heaven crumbles
My powers growing faster
I look over my fiery paradise
Yes the last two realms have paid the price
Christ and Satan chained to the wall
From my grace they will never fall
I release a howl, it's piercing unreal
The pain it causes, my demons reel
I call to them "serve me forever"
Agree and your human ties I will sever
Christ and Satan screaming with fright
As I set the night of earth alight
Fires blaze
An unholy haze
Demons pour into earth
My horrid gaze
Towns are razed
It is my second birth
What's left of heaven is its glowing ashes
While back on earth thunder crashes
Storms on the planet have all swirled
While my utopian army destroys the world
Leaving the old and boring era behind
I laugh and smile... the world is mine.

NO TIME

NO TIME TO RELAX.
NO TIME TO BREATHE.
EVERYTHING RUSHING BY.
EVERYONE BUSY.
AS THE SAYING GOES.
BUSY AS A BEE
TIME FLIES BY
WITHOUT A SINGLE BREEZE.
THE HOURS THEY GO,
UNTIL THE DAY COMES TO AN END.
NO TIME TO MYSELF
UNLESS IT'S TIME FOR BED.

July 24, 1998

I'm 60 today, so my mother says
So what? My mom is almost 90; Whew!
We laid Dad Ziemer away at 73;
Grandpa Ziemer lived to be 91 but Grandma only 80.
It paid Grandpa to be kind!
Mom's mom and dad checked out before that:
70 and 75, to be exact.

My friend Fred lived to be 103. His dad 105.
My wife's mother died at 88, cool Katie Kuhl lived to be 93;
It was my wife's mother's good care that kept Katie going.
Some think it was her money and good breeding.
When I met Sarah Knauss, she was 116;
Now look at her--118!
And the oldest woman in the world to boot!

Have I got a friend in Pennsylvania or what!
I'll say! It's old age. I've got a ways to go
Before catching up with aforelisted family and friends.
It's getting easier and easier to catch up to them.

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I'll not die in my 50's; made it past that mark;
40's and 30's remain vivid in my gray matter.

Passed my physical too. Puzzled the doctor to no end
As I faced his inquisition.
He couldn't find a thing wrong as he listened and probed,
hammered joints and tapped his fingers ooover the surface.
I pissed in a cup; coughed, turning left and right;
(Dad would have been proud!)
"Reflexes fine; eyes, ears, and nose okay;
"BP 118 over 68", PSA was negative too.
"Do you exercise?" asked he.
"I'm at the gym at 6:00 AM daily," said me.
Cholesterol was 193 the last time I donated blood;
Doc was amazed and copied all the numbers down.
So he sent me for cardio tests; maybe the hospital will find
Something wrong, or foul me up instead. Hope not!
"I note, 'this is an unremarkable physical,' but your condition is remarkable",
"How old are you?"
"Before you peek, pick a number," I said. But the file was in his hand.

So I'm sixty for a whole year, and now free to be me;
It's the wrinkles on the face that bother me.
"What can you do about them, Father Time?"
"You're only 60, Kid. Wait 'til you're my age," chided he.

By, Dr. Ziemer

Two small girls

Barefoot on the road
Even if our small feet are cold
Happiness is ours
As this traveler passed us by
We showed her what we had spied
A small kitten
Even though it is not much
And at first it bit at our touch
We were smitten
With this tiny white kitten.

By, Rachel Stick



THE TICKING OF GUILT

In a class of real estate fundamentals that my wife and I took, there was taught the concept of “highest and best use of” a piece of property. That dictated the fate of real estate, whether it was to be left as raw and, as housing, as commercial, or as agriculture.

In a way the highest and best use of “time” in the Ziemer household that spawned me held a similar value dictated largely by Dad and his large railroad pocket watch. His famous words to us at the end of many meals were, “Well, Boys, let’s go to work.” And off to tractors, balers, combines, fields, forests, and livestock we went. He was a Cancer—a water sign, and most of us boys and Mom were Leos, or fire signs. Imagine the mixture.

As we got older, Dad used to say, supported by Mom, I’m convinced, “If you boys stick around the farm—when the trend was to leave the farm and find work in a factory or join the military—and help ‘the old man,’ I’ll see to it that you get a college education.” Coming from those lips—a seventh-grade achiever—made them seem beyond our reach. But Mom’s own college education and career as an educator backed this value in her quiet way.

Dad disliked lazy people—“lazy bastard” being one of his oft-used expressions. He also imparted, “Any man who’ll lie to you will steal from you.” Being lazy was equivalent to stealing time away from someone else—family chores or employer. Dad’s watch kept the time for us to start and stop work in the field. “Well Boys, it’s time to go to dinner” (noon meal) or “It’s time to quit and go to supper,” or “It’s time to study or go to bed.” “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” The guilt trip I would experience—long before guilt-free potato chips arrived—about my use of time in college or in later life never dawned on me then. If I’m non-productive, I may as well be in jail.

Dad’s wisdom rivaled my grandfather’s who told us boys, “The Bible says it’s better to sow your seed in the belly of a whore than spill it on the ground.” At six years of age I had earned a Bible for perfect attendance at a summer Vacation Bible School. When I proudly brought it home and showed it to my grandmother, she said, “There are things in that book that little children shouldn’t read.” So I started from the beginning and read to the end and located every one of those passages, I’m sure.

Many years later when he was 80, my grandfather had his own spiritual awakening to faith and my wife and I bought him his own large-print Bible to read. Every time he completed reading it he wrote the month and day in the back. After he died eleven years later, I inherited this Bible and checked those dates that he read it—37 times in all.

And so with the homespun commandments of Dad Ziemer, we matured, and Richard, Rodney, Robert and David Ziemer earned university educations. Our parents put no restrictions on where we could attend college—we could even leave the state of Oregon to do so. And so, off to universities went four young workaholic teenagers: known in the

dining hall as waiters, in the library as reference workers for other students doing research, in the faculty wing as teachers' proofreaders and paper graders, on campus security working the night watch rounds, on campus maintenance keeping the campus up and running, or tutoring and reading to sight-impaired students.

"Play" seemed not to be taught in our family. If it happened, we captured the moment by playing hard just as we worked hard. The booklet I was given, Play Ball, Son, by Dad's sister who pitched (without a glove) on the boys' baseball team helped us experience some family recreational teamwork. Since Dad could not run well, he usually pitched, and his stature as a Paul Bunyan on the mound burned many a ball into a catcher's unprotected hand.

We were in school plays and musical groups but reflected not on the value of leisure to rebuild ourselves other than what we acquired through sleep and rest. I remember wanting to study voice lessons with a retired opera singer in Sandy, Oregon. Dad said I could, but I'd have to pay for them myself, training the voice didn't hold a candle to playing a guitar or an accordion. Furthermore, the guitar-toting troubadour who swept through Sandy selling acoustic and electric guitars with twenty lessons convinced Dad that boys our age should be playing Hawaiian or Spanish guitars. We studied and practiced for two years. Once during the local Sandy Strawberry Festival Dad sufficiently convinced the manager of a traveling amusement group that my brother and I could provide excellent accompaniment to his merry-go-round. Rodney and I sat on chairs surrounded by sawdust and played electric steel Hawaiian guitars while people threw in money. That was years before Elvis Presley became famous. Promoter Dad was pleased.

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But picking berries on Alma Frances Fields' farm garnered me cash to use for summer afternoon lessons for what I considered my instrument—my 14-year old voice. What all that early work also generated was a savings for me of \$456.00 put away in the Clackamas County Bank at 1% interest to pay my tuition. The first semester's tuition was exactly \$456.00, so I was well on my way to financing my own education. Dad and Mom's financial aid kicked in as a supplement without Stafford loans or grants. I busied myself with academics and campus waitering. By spring I wanted to sing in the opera chorus for a large-scale production of "Faust" Don't remember if I asked permission or not. Having been nicknamed "Frenchie" in high school and winning the Prix d'Honneur came in handy for coaching the rest of the opera chorus in their lines. But rehearsals, performances, putting on makeup as a teenager ate into my time. How would I cope with the guilt of being recreational and not productive?

With all sons in college, Dad used to say, "We borrowed \$12,000.00 to put you kids through college." I reminded him of that oft-repeated statement when he visited us and got out my checkbook, asking, "How many zeros should I put after this number to pay you back?"

"Put away your checkbook; I don't want your money."

With that he pulled out his wallet and said, “Your Ma and I sold some land and we’re giving each of you boys some of the money. All of you helped clear the land.” In my living room I saw \$100 and \$50 dollar bills peel out of his hand with a smile. Was my dad learning to enjoy the fruits of his labor without laboring any more? Was he learning to play? To relax? I was astounded but graciously accepted the \$800.00.

“Where did you keep this money when you traveled from Oregon to Pennsylvania?” I asked.

“In a tin can under the front seat of the Ford,” Dad said.

We four Ziemer boys knew our dad invented the concept “work.” It was a relief to see some of it now tempered with generosity. Taking him grocery shopping was fun. He could always pull money out of his pocket to pay a bill faster than Mom or any of us married sons could.

“Put your money away; it’s no good,” he’d say. “Here’s mine, use it”

Must close; it’s time for class, or did someone say “Recess”?

By, Dr. Ziemer

Washing Grandma

Liudvika and I

In the middle, in the middle, you say,
so I scrub the spot where the bra bothers you most.
Scrub over the blotches of broken blood.
They come in three colors:
bright red, purple and black.
It's from her medicine, the doctor tells me.
Without it she couldn't move.

Skin moves too easily,
as I rub this rag
over the dented impressions
in your hunched shoulders.
Worn paths,
made by many years
of a tightly fit brassiere holding
veiny mounds of fat.

Your naked back.
This soapy soaked terrycloth
cannot feel its softness.
Soft from time, like a piece of meat
cooked on the stove all day.

Excess suds run over your mounds
of buttocks (one larger than the other),
and down your dimpled thighs to
calf. I can still see its core shape,
wide muscle at the top tapering
at the tendon
to the foot that once proudly adorned...
a high heel everyday.

I touch you underneath the elbow
you raise for me to wash underneath.
I say, *hold your arms like a rooster*.
Flapping your arms up and down,
Cappa cappa dashems, you crow.
Your wit has not gone.

Now you take the rag.

By,
Courtney Beidelman



The Gleaner

High School Writing Competition

The English Department

is very happy to have sponsored its second
high school writing competition,
which was designed to showcase the work
of young writers in the area.

We were amazed at the talent, sensitivity, and
ear for language shown in their poetry and prose.
Our thanks and congratulations go to them, their families,
and, of course, their English teachers!

L. M.

Full Circle

*I see her and feel a strange maternal adoration-
But she is much, much older than I,
And once she felt that towards me. . . .
Maybe she still does?
Led me by the hand, mine chubby and soft in hers,
I was a baby and she guided me.
We sat by the big pond, feeding ducks.
One duck, two ducks, three.
See the ducks?
So many ducks!
Waddling, they come up to us.
My eyes glow in awe.*

*Now I lead her by the hand, hers wrinkled and soft in mine.
She is like a baby, innocent yet wise.
And I guide her; she is as naïve as a child.
Smiling at the ducks, she counts them-
So many ducks!
Do you see, do you see all of them?
Tossing bits of bread with her wizened hands,
Shaking now, not with exhilaration, but with age,
She is like a baby.
And I guide her now.*

*We have come full circle-
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
From innocent to innocent.
It is all the same and then becomes the dawn again.
We return to death just as we are born.
And the little ducks continue to advance, always in search of bread
But in the cycle, at some time or other, all of us, even the ducks
Are naked.*

Money

A woman stares out her kitchen window
Thinks about her life
Once divorced, once devastated
Now she has him
He's handsome, rich, a father
Demanding of respect
Authoritative, controlling, impatient
Emotionally abusive
Arrogant, dishonest, frustrating
Uneducated and egotistical
A tear rolls down her powdered cheek
And falls to the heavy rock on her finger
It shimmers and she is reminded
Security
Looks out again and admires the pretty trees
They are the color of money
So she drops to her knees

Erin Snyder
Wissahickon High School
Mrs. Fimiano
Grade 12

I met Death one day,
Walking down the avenue,
And stopped to chat awhile.
He tipped his hat, ever the gentleman,
And deigned to keep me company
As I wandered through the tree-lined streets,
Overhung with branches.
The mist rose silver, and our feet echoed
Through the indigo dusk.
Death took my arm,
White-faced and handsome as any lover,
And as I bent my head I heard him whisper,
Soft in my ear,
"Come with me.
The stars shall have no fire
To equal the heat of my kisses,
And the gentle air shall never
Surpass the tenderness of my caress.
Oh, come with me,
And let us two teach the world
What it is to love!
Come with me,
And the brightness of the midday sun
Shall never out-shine your happiness,
Nor the silver face of the moon
Eclipse your joy.
Oh! Come!
Lest my heart break
Into a thousand pieces,
Scattered by the desert winds,
Each separate particle mirroring your face
To the restless sky.
If my heart were a platter
I would serve my soul upon it,
And if my love were a fountain
I would pour its waters at your feet.
Come with me,
Let us walk together,
And under your tiny, wandering footsteps,
The whole of creation will burst into bloom."

Erin Snyder
Wissahickon High School
Mrs. Fimiano
Grade 12

Tyger

An air of sickness clung to her as she hurried through the crowded streets, her books clasped tightly to her chest. She'd been dreaming of a tiger, the old dream, the one she had in the hospital when she'd wake up shaking and sweating, her teeth biting her lip so deeply they drew blood. It seemed she had always been in the hospital, always had that dream when she was so sick the doctors would shake their heads in the corridors and whisper in low tones, "Such a pity... so young!"

That had been why her family had moved to this busy Southern city, the hope that maybe warmth and sunlight would cure her when nothing else could. But now she was more alone than ever, in this place where her accent branded her a foreigner each time she opened her mouth. And so she hurried home, not noticing the crisp, sharp beauty of the golden autumn leaves in her longing to reach her bed and cry into her pillow, the way she always did when the pain got too bad, the loneliness more than she could bear.

What did she look like to these Southern people, she wondered. What did they see when they glanced her way, at the slim, tall woman-child, shoulders hunched and bony from her prolonged illness? Did they remark upon her penchant for tripping, for breaking things? She could not believe they didn't whisper exclamations to each other behind their hands when she passed.

She was winded from walking too fast, had to stop and rest for a moment to let the pain in her lungs subside, but the pain didn't go away. She doubled over, gasping, her

books tumbling to the street. A choking, squeezing feeling rose in her throat, seeming to go on forever. It was accompanied by a harsh, rasping noise throbbing in her ears, and she realized that it was her own labored breathing.

A soft hand brushed her elbow, took her and held her steady until the fit had passed and she could feel the pain subsiding. A warm, quiet voice, full of concern, asked, "Are you all right?"

She nodded, choking out a "Yes" as she turned to look at the person who had stopped to help her in the strange city. It was a young man, his face still marked with the softness of a child and a delicate, almost feminine beauty. His auburn hair was tied back with a soft black ribbon, and his wide brown eyes regarded her with grave consideration. He had gathered up her books from where they had fallen.

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"Do you need help?" he asked, and she marveled at the low, silky quality of his voice. Mutely, she shook her head, and reached to take her texts from him. He didn't stop her, but somehow she found herself letting him keep them, and accepting his offer to walk her home.

He was amazingly distracting. She had to force herself not to stare at him, at the strange, catlike grace with which he moved, at the way one strand of hair fell in his eyes. As she watched, he idly picked a wildflower from a nearby hedge and spun it by its stem, then, laughing delightedly, put it behind her ear, where it fell out and entangled itself in her hair. She found herself laughing, too, as she hadn't laughed in years, ever since the sickness.

They sat down on one of the wrought iron benches of the little outdoor cafes so she could rest and catch her breath, the chiseled vines and roses pressing into her back

with an excruciatingly delicious sharpness. The bright gold of the leaves was almost painful in its radiance. He was telling her about people, about the men and women who passed them, leisurely and confident in crisp suits, hands on hats to keep them from blowing off in the wind. "This woman, she's afraid for her daughter, Lydia. Lydia is pregnant, and the baby is dying. And that man, he's full of anger, hate, greed, all mixed into one obscene lust. He's wanted in Ohio."

"So sad..." she murmured, eyes on the frail wreaths of clouds scudding across the sky. "Aren't there any happy stories?"

"The happy stories end the soonest," he said, studying a blade of grass with quiet intensity, then turning to look at her with the same steadfast gaze. "The truly tragic ones never really stop. You never get to write 'finis' on the end of the page."

"No end? How sad..."

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A melancholy smile flitted across his lips; then he was on his feet, gently urging her up. "We should get you home; it's going to rain soon. Look, you can see the undersides of the leaves in the wind."

"I like the rain," but she was getting up, giving in and they were turning down the street, passing the crowds of Friday tourists, two more strangers in the eyes of the world. They hurried, a right turn here, and yes, there was the old Victorian, its paint peeling, shutters banging against the walls in the rising wind. "Well," she said, searching for words to thank him, but he bent and kissed her quickly, then walked off, keeping time with the dead leaves swirling in little circles down the street.

She lay in her bed that night drifting in a sleepy half-doze, arms wrapped around her old, soft pillow and still feeling his kiss upon her lips. The storm beat patterns on the

windowpane, an old Spanish dance fading into something strange and earthy, vaguely like the rustle of the leaves in the jungle. She thought she saw a tiger standing silhouetted against the window, its auburn hair shining in the intermittent flickers of the old iron streetlight, but her eyes were closed. She felt its warm, moist breath as it stood at the foot of the bed, heard the creek of the floorboards under its weight.

She opened her eyes and embraced it.



Evening at Stirling Redoubt

A cool, gray mist suspended from low clouds covered the gentry rolling battlefield. In the distance, the smoke of camp fires revealed the proximity of the British. Shadowy, box-like formations stood grouped towards the edge of the field, British soldiers tall and straight, and they were moving steadily, unfalteringly forward, a saber to the mist and a challenge to the waiting Americans. Closer and closer they came, and they neared the jagged picket fence, the outer bulwark of American defense. And crushing the fence, they came closer still, until the American cannon boomed and belched forth their fire and smoke from behind their mighty dirt embankments. Then, the musketeers opened fire, and volley upon volley, crisscrossed the field. Men lay crying and dying, the field trodden by their feet and the clover purpled by their blood. And all this happened as the moving men shadowed and hallowed the ground between the cannons and the fence.

A patch of blue broke through the shrouded sky, whitening the clouds and dissolving the mist. 65
In the distance, a column of smoke slowly rose from a factory chimney. Trees, their deep verdancy darkened by the dusk, sent creeping shadows across the field and the gray splintered picket fence that bisected it. And between a grassy time-worn embankment and the withered old fence lay a lawn of white and purple clover. Three silent cannon, anchored to the earth by entangling vines, poked their rusty noses from behind the mound. And to the left and right of the scene stood two monuments to its history, a chapel commemorating its spiritual peace and a great arch memorializing its great sacrifice.

The lurid coolness of the thousand deaths
Penetrated the evening stillness.
Sacrifice at its greatest,
Martyrs all.

Peaceful memories invaded
The calm, lonely battlefield;
Rusting cannon, a withered fence,
Pure, white clover.

Julie Hackenbracht
Upper Dublin HS
Dr. Elizabeth Treat
Eleventh Grade

Theory of Relativity

"Do you always wear black?" We were shopping. I'd found a black and gray skirt with a nice black sweater. Black matched. (Black and black go together, I've always found.)

"Yes." Heavy on the sarcasm. She didn't notice.

"You shouldn't. It's unattractive." Marcy and I disagreed frequently.

Marcy was my cousin. I was from Maryland, she came from Nevada. She only visited us every couple of years, so it was a major event when she came.

My parents didn't mind her much, though they admitted her values are a little misplaced. This meant Marcy preferred things to people. And, as I compared her to my beautiful gray skirt, I thought she might be right, I liked the skirt better than her.

I feel guilty for that. She was the relative closest to my age (we were separated by three months chronologically but light years in all other ways). So my parents and I agreed that we should try to get along.

During Marcy's visits, my mother liked to remind me that she'd someday be the "closest thing to a sister you've got." My future life was looking bleak.

I paid for the skirt. Marcy waited for me out in the mall, trolling for boys.

I caught up with her in the food court. She was smiling at the guy behind the hamburger stand. I knew him. Rob. He was one of my friends, so of course I wasn't going to introduce them. I dragged Marcy away and out to the car. Turned on the radio to my favorite station (from the local college -- good stuff that you

heard once and never again), opened the windows, and pulled out. Marcy shut the windows and put on the dance music. I opened the windows. She shut them.

It wasn't worth fighting about. We drove home, AC blowing and Spice Girls blaring.

As soon as we got home I ran to my room to change -- I was wearing a black skirt and feeling sort of insecure about the whole born-too-late-beat-poet thing.

Marcy was sitting on my bed already, reading Cosmopolitan. "I'm going to fix up your hair. Give it some style." She whipped out a pair of scissors. (I guess she got them from my desk, though I'm not really sure why she would have been in there). I'm very weak-willed, I'll admit, so I sat down on the floor in front of her and shut my eyes as she snipped.

I shouldn't have worried. Marcy was a star student at the cosmetology school.

"I've never cut hair on a real person before."

"Oh. So, um, what do you use?" I tried to sound nonchalant.

"Foam heads," she answered, with absolute seriousness.

I laughed. I shouldn't have, but I did. Which is when she got me with the scissors.

It was an accident, I'm sure. But it hurt.

"Look what you made me do. Now I'll have to cut it shorter to even everything out."

I hadn't been worried until then. But had I been a seventy

-year-old-man with high cholesterol, I would have had a heart attack or burst a vessel or something like that.

I tried to stay sitting in front of her, but I couldn't do it. I ran to the mirror.

My hair was half decent. I'm not sure what she did, but it worked. I felt bald. But a good sort of bald.

At dinner, my mother asked me what happened to my hair. When I told her that Marcy had cut it, she looked surprised. "You know, your hair does look nice." I started to thank her, but Marcy chimed in.

"Yeah, I know, her hair was dull, but I fixed it. I always do well on that kind of cut. I mean, hair like that makes anybody look good."

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I was glad when Marcy left. I told her I hoped she'd come back soon and she invited me to visit her the next summer, but neither of us meant it.

Marcy would come back to Maryland a couple years later. Not much choice in the matter. My parents would decide that she and I should bond, her parents would agree, and soon we'd be all be reunited at the airport.

She stepped into the terminal. She was pretty much a grown up. Even though we were the same age. It was different for Marcy. I guess it was that she already had a job in a hair and nail place and I was just sitting around for one more summer, waiting to leave for college in the fall. However mature I'd thought I was, nothing really got me ready for seeing my cousin.

We got back home, and before she had even unpacked she told me that she wanted to cut my hair again. I said thanks but no thanks this time -- I knew better. "I've learned a lot since last time, though," she said. "I could make you look good." She gave me a look that I didn't really like.

Marcy and my mother went to the grocery store together. They compared the price of bananas in Las Vegas and Baltimore.

Somewhere in there we canceled our traditional shopping trip. And then one night I heard Marcy, on the telephone with someone, refer to me as her "little cousin."

She told us that she probably wouldn't come back for a few years. I noticed, as she packed up to go, that all her clothes were black. "It's how everyone dresses," she said. "Very attractive. Makes you look more interesting. Thinner." She picked up a black tank top and tossed it over. "Try it on. It never did fit me quite right. Kind of big." Again that look.

When Marcy left, she told me to come visit her in Vegas and promised my parents that she'd take good care of me. They seemed to believe her.

Marcy, taller than me, older than me, (barely, I kept reminding myself,) got onto the plane to go home. I didn't miss her.

I wore the tank top to the airport. It looked decent, I had to admit, but I mostly wore it to make Marcy feel better. I had three like it at home.

"Theory of Relativity"

by Emily Clinch
Grade 11, Mrs. Simeon
North Penn High School

Life

Life has paths to follow

There is a fork in the road, which way to turn

You need someone to guide you

How will you ever learn?

One road is crooked, full of obstacle

There may be a reward at the end

The other is straight and simple

No challenges, no bend

The crooked one is rarely taken

The other an easy way out

If only there was a middle road

There would be nothing to question about

The easy road is tempting

But you know that it is wrong

You want to prove to everyone

You can accomplish anything, no matter how long

Pausing for a moment

You have to make your choice

So much pressure either way

But then you hear a voice
Something within you tells you what's right
Outside you don't hear the same
You chose the crooked path to prove how strong you are
Friends chose differently but it's not them to blame
It was a difficult journey and you have made it
The two roads meet again
Now you can accomplish anything
The other side needs something in which to depend
You feel so good and proud
That's the way it should be
You see friends from the other side
They can not quite see
There is no reward visible
But inside you know
What you heard from the inside
Was the right way to go



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